

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A multiple print engine for printing a multi-page job with multiple copies, comprising:

a plurality of physical print engines, each having an input for receiving a rasterized data image and an output bin for outputting copies of the rasterized image;

a RIP engine for receiving a multi-page input job for rasterizing thereof into individual pages as a plurality of rasterized images;

a storage medium for storing said rasterized images of the pages;

a virtual stack device for defining at least two virtual printers, each having associated therewith a plurality of said physical print engines, but less than all, said physical print engines associated with each of said virtual printers grouped according to different characteristics of said physical print engines; said virtual stack device operable to process a job stored in said storage medium and virtually organizing pages in said received job in a stack corresponding to the manner in which they can be retrieved from the physical print engine by user in an order and number defined by the user;

a job router for defining the one of said virtual printers when a multiple-copy job is routed to a select one of said virtual printers in accordance with the characteristics of said virtual printer and said multi-page, multiple-copy job;

a job stacking device for segmenting each of said virtual stacks into discrete job stacks, each of said discrete job stacks associated with one of said physical print engines in the associated virtual printer; and

a print control device for printing each of said job stacks in the associated one of said physical print engines.

2. The multiple print engine of Claim 1, wherein said virtual stack is organized in a collated manner with all pages of each of said multiple copies in a sequential order, with each of said copies disposed adjacent each other.

3. The multiple print engine of Claim 1, wherein said virtual stack is organized in a collated and gathered manner with all copies of each page disposed adjacent each other and in a gathered mode, such that each gathered group of pages is disposed adjacent each other.

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4. The multiple print engine of Claim 1, wherein said job routing is operable to accommodate a multi-page, multiple-copy job for each of said virtual printers, such that said virtual stacking device will create a virtual stack for each of said virtual printers for processing thereof.

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